

SOUTH WESTERN REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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February 16, 2011

To: Connecticut General Assembly Transportation Committee
From: Honorable Jeb Walker, Chairman, South Western Region Metropolitan Planning
Organization and First Selectman, Town of New Canaan
Re: **Proposed Legislation Related to Tolling and Highway Congestion**

Thank you for providing our organization with an opportunity to comment on proposed tolling and highway congestion legislation. Seven of the South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's eight municipalities have I-95 or the Merritt Parkway traversing their boundaries. These are the two most heavily traveled corridors in Connecticut and are congested in both directions from the New York State line through the Greater Bridgeport and South Central regions.

Any tolling strategy under consideration for Connecticut must recognize that due to the bi-directional nature of congestion and limited right-of-way, there is no room in many locations to add lanes or create contra-flow lanes and physical toll barriers will only create additional congestion. The recent \$1 million *Connecticut Electronic Tolling and Congestion Pricing Study* looked at what are considered traditional approaches (High Occupancy Toll or HOT lanes, and full congestion pricing). The study's conclusions support our **opposition** to the following proposed bills:

Border Tolls

Senate Bill 31: AN ACT REQUIRING THE OPERATION OF GATEWAY TOLLS

House Bill 6136: AN ACT ESTABLISHING TOLLS AT CONNECTICUT'S BORDERS

Border tolling on major highways is **not** congestion pricing and would result in significant local economic and environmental impacts from diversions. Regions on the state border cannot alone be subject to a fee as if they were a "toll island" because of the impact on quality of life and economic development.

Truck Tolling

House Bill 5949: AN ACT INSTITUTING TOLL CHARGES FOR TRUCKS USING CONNECTICUT INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS

Instituting toll charges for trucks using Connecticut interstate highways arbitrarily discriminates against one type of vehicle and does nothing to address congestion.

Future Studies

Senate Bill 770: AN ACT REQUIRING THE COMMISSIONER OF TRANSPORTATION TO STUDY CONGESTION ON I-95

House Bill 6195: AN ACT REQUIRING A FEASIBILITY AND IMPACT STUDY OF CONVERTING HIGH-OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANES TO "TRUCKS AND BUSES ONLY" LANES

Spending more scarce financial resources to further study congestion on I-95 or the feasibility of converting high occupancy vehicle lanes to "trucks and buses only" lanes is not needed, especially at a time when the State's financial position is dire.